



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett warned today that measures are being taken to prevent further damage and destruction of prehistoric ruins on the Navajo Reservation.

The 24,000 square mile Navajo Reservation extends into the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

“We have been informed that certain ruins on the Navajo Reservation have been souvenir-hunted and damaged, reportedly by both Indians and non-Indians,” said Bennett. “Timbers are being taken from these ruins, and artifacts stolen and sold to traders in the area.

“I want to point out two things:

“First, the Navajo people have a stake in protecting these areas. They are of long range economic value because of their scenic and historic attraction to tourists, not to mention their irreplaceable cultural value to the Navajo people. This should be especially underlined in this, the Navajo’s centennial celebration year.

“Secondly, the Federal Antiques Act specifically prohibits the taking of artifacts from historic ruins, and they may be seized from anyone who has them in their possession. This includes second and third parties involved.

Bennet said that Navajo Council Chairman Raymond Nakai has been assured of the Department of the Interior’s cooperation in trying to prevent further depredations on tribal land.

The Navajo Tribal Rangers and the Law and Order staff of the Bureau of Indian Affairs both are seeking to apprehend violators.

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<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/bennett-warns-vandalism-navajo-reservation-ruins>